

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 DHA-02 MCT-01 IO-13 ACDA-07 OMB-01 /100 W

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FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6863

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 105

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XY, CN SG, MR

SUBJECT: FRANCO-AFRICAN CONFERENCE DAKAR - APRIL 1977

REF: (A) STATE 2032, (B) 76 NOUAKCHOTT 205, (C) 76 NOUAKCHOTT 283,

(D) 76 NOUAKCHOTT 811

1. WHILE MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT (GIRM) IS UNDOUBTEDLY SYMPATHETIC TO THE POLICY OBJECTIVES WHICH HAVE PROMPTED PRESIDENT SENGHOR TO ORGANIZE PROPOSED FRANCO-AFRICAN CONFERENCE (CONTAINMENT OF AND RIPOSTE TO SOVIET/CUBAN MEDDLING IN AFRICA), GIRM'S LONGSTANDING AND DEEPLY-FELT NON-ALIGNMENT PLUS VERY REAL POLITICAL (INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC) CONFIDENTIAL

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AND MILITARY PROBLEMS IT CURRENTLY FACES WILL REQUIRE GIRM TO TREAD VERY CAREFULLY RE PROJECTED CONFERENCE TO AVOID ROUSING ANTI-IMPERIALIST, ANTI-SAHARA, AND SOCIALIST/MILITANT SLEEPING DOGS HERE AND ABROAD. POLITICAL REALITIES WILL REQUIRE GIRM REP TO KEEP IN DEEP BACKGROUND IF GIRM ATTENDS DAKAR MEETING, AND MAY EVEN REQUIRE GIRM TO TAKE MOST UNUSUAL STEP OF PASSING AN ATTRA-

CTIVE INTERNATIONAL GATHERING BY.

2. MAURITANIAN PERCEPTION OF SOVIET/CUBAN PRESENCE: ON GRAND STRATEGY LEVEL, SENIOR-MOST FOREIGN POLICY PLANNERS OF GIRM IN EARLY 1976 WERE ACUTELY AWARE OF AND CONCERNED ABOUT SOVIET/CUBAN PRESENCE IN ANGOLA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR (A) CONTINUED POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE OF AFRICA AND OF COUNTRIES IN IMMEDIATE AREA, AND (B) MAURITANIA'S ABILITY TO MAINTAIN ITS OWN POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE IN FACE OF SERIES OF SOVIET STRONG POINTS RANGING AFRICAN COAST FROM ANGOLA TO ALGERIA. (SEE REFS B, C, AND D - NOTAL.) ON MORE PEDESTRIAN LEVEL OF DAY-TO-DAY POLITICAL OPERATIONS AND, SPECIFICALLY OF KEEPING TABS ON LARGE RESIDENT SOVIET COMMUNITY, GIRM POLICYMAKERS AND UPPER MIDDLE BUREAUCRATS MANIFEST CONSIDERABLY LESS ANXIETY AND DEMONSTRATE MUCH LESS EFFECTIVE CONCERN. SINCE WE HAVE HAD NO OCCASION TO DISCUSS SOVIET/CUBAN ACTIP TIES WITH GIRM POLICYMAKERS RECENTLY, WE CAN ONLY SURMISE THAT SHARP WORRY OF LAST SPRING HAS SURVIVED HEAT OF SUMMER AND RAINS OF FALL. THE MORE SO SONCE OFFICERS AND MEN OF MAURITANIAN ARMED FORCES HAVE SPENT PAST YEAR FIGHTING POLISARIO GUERILLAS ARMED WITH SOVIET WEAPONS AND TRAINED (IN OPINION OF GIRM INTELLIGENCE PERSONNEL AT LEAST) IN PART BY CUBANS. NEVERTHELESS, PUBLIC STANCE OF GIRM REMAINS, AS IT HAS BEEN FOR 16 YEARS, INTENSE DESIRE TO BE FRIENDS WITH EVERYONE -- INCLUDING SOVIETS. PRIVATE RECOGNITION OF SOVIET DANGER TO MAURITANIAN INDEPENDENCE BY HANDFUL OF SENIOR EXECUTIVES AND SECURITY OFFICIALS HAS YET TO BE TRANSLATED INTO EFFECTIVE COUNTERACTION. ONLY ON PHILOSOPHICAL-IDEOLOGICAL LEVEL HAS MAURITANIAN CONCERN RE

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SOVIET INFLUENCE BEEN PUBLICLY ARTICULATED, AND THEN ONLY IN TERMS OF EXPLICIT OPPOSITION TO (OTHERWISE UNIDENTIFIED) MARXIST, ATHEISTIC MATERIALISM.

3. DAKAR CONFERENCE AND REGIONAL MILITARY COOPERATION: IF PROJECTED DAKAR CONFERENCE IS BILLED AS "CONFERENCE OF FRANCOPHONE CHIEFS OF STATE", MAURITANIA IN ALL PROBABILITY WILL NOT RPT NOT ATTEND. (PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH DECLINED TO ATTEND CONFERENCE OF FRANCOPHONE CHIEFS OF STATE HELD IN PARIS IN MAY IN ACCORDANCE WITH HIS INSISTANCE THAT MAURITANIA IS ARABOPHONE NOT RPT NOT FRANCOPHONE.) IF DAKAR MEETING IS TITLED AFRICAN OR WEST AFRICAN REGIONAL SUMMIT OR CONFERENCE, OULD DADDAH MIGHT ATTEND OR SEND REPRESENTATIVE. GIRM WILL NOT, HOWEVER, BE RECEPTIVE TO DIRECT PARTICIPATION IN ANY REGIONAL MILITARY GROUPING OF VENTURE, WHATEVER TIS PRIVATE ASSESSMENTS MAY BE, OR EVEN ITS WILLINGNESS TO PROFIT FROM PUBLIC, ANTI-SOVIET/CUBAN STANCE AND COLLECTIVE DEFENSE DECISIONS OF OTHERS. GIRM DOES NOT VIEW ANY OF ITS NEIGHBORS (WITH EXCEPTION CURRENTLY OF LEADERS OF ALGERIA) AS AN

ENEMY; IT WOULD THEREFORE BE UNLIKELY TO SEE ANY PERSUASIVE REASON FOR FORMING PUBLIC MILITARY ALLIANCE, AND BY SO DOING, OFFERING EXCUSE FOR OTHER COUNTRIES TO MOUNT OR TO STEP UP SUBVERSIVE CAMPAIGNS AGAINST IT. GIRM LEADERSHIP RECOGNIZES THAT MAURITANIA IS FAR TOO WEAK POLITICALLY AND MILITARILY TO COURT ANIMOSITY. MOREOVER, DESPITE ON-GOING SAHARA WAR AND MAJOR MILITARY BUILD-UP OF PAST YEAR, MAURITANIAN LEADERSHIP HAS TRADITIONALLY, AND STILL VIEWS MILITARY SPENDING AS NON-ECONOMIC DIVERSION OF NATIONAL RESOURCES RANKING WELL BELOW ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURES ON ITS LIST OF PRIORITIES. WHILE SAHARA CRISIS HAS CAUSED TEMPORARY CHANGE IN BUDGET ALLOCATIONS, ONCE SAHARA PROBLEM IS FINALLY RESOLVED, MILITARY EXPENDITURES WILL UNDOUBTEDLY DROP BACK DOWN TOWARD BOTTOM OF LIST.

3. COOPERATION WITH FRANCE: IN PAST THREE YEARS, RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAURITANIA AND FRANCE HAS EVOLVED INTO NEW, FUNDAMENTAL-CONFIDENTIAL

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ALLY CHANGED PATTERN OF ASSOCIATION. SHIFT FROM EMOTION- AND CONFLICT- CHARGED RELATIONSHIP OF EX-COLONY WITH EX-METROPOLE TO RELATIONSHIP OF TWO POLITICALLY EQUAL (IF ECONOMICALLY AND DEVELOPMENTALLY VERY UNEQUAL) NATIONS WAS MARKED PUBLICLY BY OFFICIAL STATE VISIT OF DADDAH MADE TO PARIS IN FIRST WEEK DECEMBER 1975. IN PAST THIRTEEN MONTHS, SINCE ALGERIAN SUPPORTED POLISARIO GUERRILLAS LAUNCHED FIRST ATTACK ON MAURITANIA DECEMBER 10, 1975, FRENCH-MAURITANIAN MILITARY COOPERATION HAS (1) BEEN RE-ESTABLISHED, (2) EVOLVED ON SUPPLY SIDE FROM INITIAL AIR SHIPMENT OF MODEST AMOUNT OF GIFT CONSUMABLES (UNIFORMS, BOOTS) INTO SUBSTANTIAL SALES/PURCHASE RELATIONSHIP COVERING HAND WEAPONS, AMMUNITION, ADVANCED EQUIPMENT ("SNIPER-SCOPES", ETC), AND ARMORED CARS, AND (3) DEVELOPED ON TRAINING SIDE FROM TOTAL BREAK INTO CLOSE ASSOCIATION ON PLANNING AND SETTING UP OF NEW OFFICERS AND NCO SCHOOL IN ATAR AND ASSIGNMENT OF DOZEN OR SO FRENCH MILITARY PERSONNEL AS INSTRUCTORS. WHILE NEWLY RE-ESTABLISHED FRANCO-MAURITANIAN MILITARY COOPERATION WILL PROBABLY NOT CEASE WITH RESOLUTION OF SAHARA PROBLEM, LEVEL AND EXTENT OF COOPERATION WILL PROBABLY DROP AS MAURITANIA (A) TURNS TO OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES AS SOURCES OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND TRAINING AND (B) RE-DIRECTS ITS FULL ATTENTION AGAIN TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

4. IN SUM, WHILE GIRM IS UNCOMFORTABLE WITH IMPLICATIONS OF SOVIET/CUBAN PRESENCE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, IT IS ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT YET PREPARED TO EMBARK ON SERIES OF PUBLIC MOVES TO STRENGTHEN ITS "DEFENSE AND OTHER LINKS WITH FRANCE AND OTHER FRANCOPHONE AFRICAN STATES" AGAINST SOVIETS AND CUBANS.

HANDY SIDE

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